



## Inmate Telephone Service

FCC rules that significantly reformed interstate inmate calling service rates and practices went into effect in 2014 in an effort to stem undue high costs to inmates' families. In most cases, inmates' telephone calling options are limited to one or more of the following calling types: collect, debit account or pre-paid account. Also, incarcerated persons typically may not choose their long distance service provider. These factors, combined with unrestricted long-distance rates, often resulted in unreasonably high phone bills for inmates' families.

### Rate caps for interstate calls from prisons

Since Feb. 11, 2014, FCC rate caps for interstate calls are:

- \$0.25 per minute for collect calls
- \$0.21 per minute for debit or pre-paid calls

This equates to a per-call rate cap (including per-call charges) of:

- \$3.75 for a 15-minute call
- \$3.15 for a 15-minute debit or pre-paid call

Charges on inmate calls that exceed the new interstate rate caps are in violation of federal rules.

### Additional requirements

In addition, providers of inmate calling services are now prohibited from assessing any additional charges or fees when the inmate must use Telecommunications Relay Service equipment. (TRS is a telephone service that allows people with hearing or speech disabilities to place and receive telephone calls. Read our TRS guide at [www.fcc.gov/guides/telecommunications-relay-service-trs](http://www.fcc.gov/guides/telecommunications-relay-service-trs).)

Moreover, no inmate calling service provider may block a collect call solely because it lacks a prior billing relationship with the called party's telephone provider unless the provider also offers debit, pre-paid or pre-paid collect calling options.

FCC rules require that when an inmate places a collect call each operator service provider must identify itself to the person receiving the call before connecting the call. Each operator service provider must also disclose, before connecting the call, how the receiving party may obtain rate quotations. Additionally, the operator service provider must permit the receiving party to terminate the telephone call at no charge before the call is connected. These rules apply only to interstate operator service provider calls.

### Judicial review of other ICS rules

On Jan. 13, 2014, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit issued a partial stay of the Order establishing the new inmate calling service rules. Specifically, three of the rules ("Cost-Based Rates for Inmate Calling Services," "Interim Safe Harbor" and "Annual Reporting and Certification Requirement") are not in effect, pending further judicial review.



## Filing a complaint

If you feel you or a family member has been overcharged by an inmate calling service provider, you can file a complaint with the FCC. You have multiple options for filing a complaint with the FCC:

- File a complaint online at <https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov>
- By phone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322); ASL Videophone: 1-844-432-2275
- By mail (please include your name, address, contact information and as much detail about your complaint as possible):

Federal Communications Commission  
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau  
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division  
445 12th Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20554

Your complaint should include the following information:

- Your name, address, email address and phone number where you can be reached
- The name, phone number, city and state of the company that you are complaining about
- The amount of any disputed charges, whether you paid them, whether you received a refund or adjustment to your bill, the amount of any adjustment or refund you have received, an explanation if the disputed charges are related to services in addition to residential or business telephone services
- Details of your complaint and any additional relevant information

## Other resources

Most states have similar rules for intrastate (within a state) OSP calls. To complain about rates for intrastate collect calls from public phones in prisons, contact the state public utility commission in the state where the call originated and terminated. State public utility commission addresses may be found at [www.naruc.org/Commissions](http://www.naruc.org/Commissions) or in the blue pages or government section of your local telephone directory.

## Accessible formats

To request this article in an accessible format - braille, large print, Word or text document or audio - write or call us at the address or phone number above, or send an email to [fcc504@fcc.gov](mailto:fcc504@fcc.gov).

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